2

Various Degrees of Accountableneſs at the Day of Judgment:

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

AT

KINGSTON UPON HULL,

OCTOBER 18, 1785,

Being the Time appointed for ſwearing the MAYOR and other annual Officers of that Corporation.

By JOSEPH MILNER,

LECTURER of the ſaid CHURCH.

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Kingſton upon Hull, { BROADLEY, MAYOR,
18th *October*, 1785.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of the Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen of this Town be given to the Reverend Mr. MILNER, for his Sermon preached in the Holy Trinity Church upon this Day, being the Time appointed for ſwearing the Mayor and other annual Officers of this Corporation; that he be requeſted to publiſh the ſame; and that Mr. Alderman BRAMSTON wait upon him for that Purpoſe, with a Copy of this Reſolution.

Exad

EDWARD CODD,
Deputy Town-Clerk.

TO THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR

THE WORSHIPFUL THE ALDERMEN

AND THE RECORDER

OF THE

CORPORATION OF KINGSTON UPON HULL

THE FOLLOWING SERMON

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT

THE AUTHOR

A

SERMON.

LUKE xii. 48, latter Part.

Unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.

THAT Mankind ſhould in all their Dealings and Conduct have a particular Reſpect to the great Day of Judgment, when the Secrets of all Hearts ſhall be laid open, is the univerſal Voice of Chriſtian Wiſdom. It will be of little Conſequence, however creditably and ſucceſsfully we may have gone through the little intermediate Scenes, if we fail in that which ſhall determine whether we are to be happy or miſerable to all Eternity.

How fooliſh and abſurd is the Ambition of thoſe who aſpire to rule Mankind, and ſhine in the World as Heroes, or as Stateſmen, if they neglect thoſe Means of Salvation, by an Attention to which alone they can be approved to God! To blaze and glitter for a few Years among Men, and to leave a great Name behind them, while the Soul ſinks into Miſery and Contempt before the God who made it, and is conſign'd to the Regions, where is *wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth.*—Far more commendable is the wiſe Ambition of him, who would gladly live in humble Obſcurity all his Days, unnoticed or even deſpiſed by the World, ſtudious only to pleaſe his God, and to obtain at laſt that moſt agreeable of all Plaudits, *Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.**

He alſo whoſe Heart is ſet upon Riches or Pleaſures, is converſant in the ſame Folly, and if he remain ſo, will have Reaſon thro' all Eternity to lament it. There is, there is an awful Day, in which God will *judge the World in Righteouſneſs by Jeſus Chriſt,*† who will then appear in all the Glory and Majeſty of a Judge. It will be too late to cry for Mercy, when it is the Time of Juſtice.‡ His ſecond

* Mat. xxv. 21. † Acts xvii. 31. ‡ See the Commination uſed on Aſh-Wedneſday.

ſecond Coming will indeed be of a Nature entirely different from his firſt. He once came among us poor, low, miſerable, a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter, and to give his Life a Ranſom for many.** Our Wiſdom is to improve aright this his firſt Coming.

For how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation? † Sinners as we all are, our Wiſdom is to know in Truth and to embrace this humble and moſt compaſſionate Saviour, to the ſalutary Purpoſes of Pardon of Sin and Renewal in the Image of God. Then indeed we ſhall be prepared for his ſecond Coming, in which he will appear to take Cognizance of our Lives in general, and particularly of this capital Point, on which Salvation turns, whether we in this Life prized and received him aright, and made him our Saviour by a lively Faith. For he *ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting Deſtruction from the Preſence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power; when he ſhall come to*

* Mat. xx. 28. † Heb. ii. 3.

be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that Day.‡ So pleaſing on the one Hand, ſo terrible on the other will be the Scene of the Day of Judgment!

But the Text leads me more particularly to ſpeak of the different Degrees of Accountableneſs (though all are accountable) which will then take Place. Our Lord was juſt obſerving, that *that Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his Will, ſhall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit Things worthy of Stripes, ſhall be beaten with few Stripes.*

The more Talents, and the more Opportunities any Man has, the more dreadful will be his Account at that Day, if he abuſed them. Degrees of Puniſhment there are proportioned to the Degrees of Guilt. For Chriſtianity knows nothing of that abſurd Poſition of the antient Stoics, that all Sins are equal. Its glorious Founder here expreſsly contradicts it. Yet let it be remembered, that Hell is Hell ſtill to thoſe who are the leaſt drenched in that *Lake of Fire.*† *For unto whomſoever much is given,*

‡ 2 THESS. i. 7—11. † REV. xx. 15.

given, of him ſhall be much required; and to who Men have committed much, of him they will aſk th more.

The Maxim is founded on common Senſe, and admitted by all Mankind. The greater and the mo important the Truſt is, which is delegated to a Perſon, the more ſevere, if he betray that Tru will be his Puniſhment. Mankind in their Dealin with one another act on this Maxim. The ſame w hold good in the Lord's Dealings with his Creatur and the *many Stripes* and the *few Stripes* will equitably adjuſted to the various Degrees of hum Malignity in all who ſhall be condemned at th Day. Nor is it only of Knowledge, but of Richo of Opportunities of Improvement, of Means Grace, of any Thing in which one Man has t Advantage of another, the ſame Thing may be ſai the Reaſon of the Caſe holds good in all. *To wh Men have committed much, of him they will aſk t more.*

I ſhall now endeavour to apply the Doctrine this Maxim to ſeveral Caſes, among which the O caſion of this Day will claim a peculiar Regard.

I. If it be true, that unto whomſoever much is iven, of him ſhall much be required; if this equi- ble Maxim of human Conduct be adopted by the orable Founder of Chriſtianity, and incorporated o his Syſtem of judicial Adminiſtration, let us gliſhmen beware; for there is not a Nation un- Heaven, to whom the Maxim may with more tice be applied. Even to the pooreſt of us God y ſay, Much is given to you, and therefore much ll be required of you at my great Day of Account. e Advantages we all have in this Country for ght, for Inſtruction, for Civilization, are equal, more than equal to what any Nation under the n enjoys. If it be true that Slavery debaſes the man Mind, and takes away half the Man, is re a Country in the World beſides our own, ere it can be ſaid, there lives not a Slave in it? r this is its peculiar Boaſt, that the Moment one, o is elſewhere a Slave, ſets Foot on Britiſh Ground, becomes free. The much-injured African, who pans beneath Oppreſſion's Load in other Climes, here at leaſt, if he ſhould reach our hoſpitable ores, breathe the air of Freedom, and dread no re the Laſh of the Tormentor. And the uſeful ſtitution of Charity Schools † provides, in ſome Meaſure,

† There is great Room however for Improvement on this Head, Week-Day School of this Sort, on a liberal and extenſive Plan, ms to be a great Deſideratum in this Town.

Meaſure, that the Pooreſt may learn to read the Word of God. The eſtabliſhed Church alſo is purely conſtituted in its Doctrine according to the divine Word, and certainly has not, in that Reſpect, its Superior in the World. Liberty of Conſcience alſo is here enjoyed, not in Name only, but in Reality. And when to all this we add the upright Adminiſtration of Juſtice, which prevails in this Land, I would aſk any Man who conſiders at all how corrupt human Nature is, if we are not exceedingly indebted to God that we were born Engliſhmen? Is not much given to us? ſhall not much be required of us? If thoſe factious Spirits who take Delight in abuſing their Liberty, and who have not a thankful Regard to God for diſtinguiſhed Bleſſings, were for a little Time to taſte of Deſpotic Tyranny on the one Hand, or of Republican Madneſs on the other, in ſome different Region, they might then learn what thoſe Advantages are, which they now ſo ungratefully enjoy. This I muſt ſay, that Licentiouſneſs and Rebellion are Weeds that have the leaſt Excuſe poſſible for thriving on Engliſh Ground. But though I could with Pleaſure dwell on the peculiar Advantages of our Country, which uſed to be the Delight of Engliſhmen, though of late, through the Decline of Public Spirit, grown unfaſhionable, yet I muſt leave this Subject, and attend cloſely to what ſtill more concerns us.

Many

Many poor People are ready enough to ſay, To us little is given, and therefore of us little will be required. Will it not be ſaid on the contrary at the laſt Day, "You Engliſhmen, the pooreſt of you, have had much committed to you. You had every Sort of Liberty which reaſonable Men could deſire. No Fines, no Tortures, no Inquiſition hindered you from ſeeking religious Truth, and from profeſſing and practiſing it. The Word of God was † with you, and the two Sacraments, thoſe three ſtanding Witneſſes for Chriſt upon Earth. Let it now be ſeen on Trial this awful Day, what Superiority above other Nations you can ſhew in Godlineſs and Virtue." If this be a reaſonable Inquiry, it behoves us to conſider, how we can anſwer it. Some who boaſt of their religious Liberty, ſeem to make no other Uſe of it but to the Purpoſes of Profaneneſs. The State allows them to follow what Religion they pleaſe, and they chuſe to follow none at all. But the true Uſe of religious Liberty is, ſurely, to chuſe the beſt; and to determine what is the beſt, every one ſhould ſearch the Scriptures. § "But the Scrip-

"tures

† 1 JOHN v. 8.

§ It is true, I take for granted here the Divinity of the Scriptures. They have been abundantly demonſtrated to be what they profeſs: And no Infidel that I know of has undertaken, in Form, to refute the Poſition.

" tures cannot be underſtood by common People." An abſurd Aſſertion; more worthy of Papiſts than of Proteſtants, exceedingly injurious to the Honour of God, and, bleſſed be his Name, contradicted by Matter of Fact! For it were eaſy for me to produce in this Place in which we live, poor People who fear God and believe in Jeſus Chriſt, who could demonſtrate that they do underſtand the Eſſentials of Chriſtian Doctrine, and prove what they hold, in ſuch a Manner as no Adverſary on Earth could confute. And on the other Hand there are many Perſons in higher Life very ignorant of the Scriptures, being prejudiced againſt them, even without Examination of their Contents, and never making them an Object of ſerious Study.

To cloſe then this firſt Caſe, which you ſee concerns all Engliſhmen, even the pooreſt, it is our Duty to look forward to the laſt Day, and to ſee that we be faithful to the Truſt repoſed in us; in civil Things, that we abuſe not our Liberty, but demean ourſelves with orderly Submiſſion to our Governors and to the Laws; in Religion, that we daily, (and I know not how to lay an Emphaſis ſtrong enough on the Thought which I would preſs on your Conſciences) daily I ſay, read and meditate on the Word of God, till we feel all its Power, taſte its

more than mellifluous ſweetneſs,§ be acquainted with the precious Saviour which it exhibits, obtain true Peace of Conſcience through his Sacrifice,‖ and find an animating Spring within us, inducing us to follow his Example: And thus we may anſwer the awful Inquiry of the laſt Day with unſpeakable Satisfaction.

II. Let me be allowed now with all that Frankneſs which becomes a Miniſter of Chriſt, and I will add alſo a Citizen of this free Country, and yet with that Modeſty and Reſpect which is due, to addreſs you the Magiſtrates of this Corporation. The Maxim deſerves your Attention alſo. Much is given to you, of you much will be required. Your Country has committed to you the Government and Regulation of this opulent and commercial Borough; and, as it grows, and is likely to grow in Populouſneſs and Importance, the more is expected from you, and the more Care is requiſite in the Diſcharge of your Truſt. Theſe human Maxims, we have ſeen, are transferred and incorporated into Chriſtianity, and it behoves you to ſee how you ſhall anſwer before God for your Diſcharge of the Public Truſt. *For there is no Power but of God; the Powers that be are ordained of God.* † Let me then beſeech you to accuſtom yourſelves

§ PSALM xix. 10. ‖ HEB. x. 19, &c. the Paſſage deſerves the deepeſt Attention. † ROM. xiii. 1.

yourſelves to the Conſideration of your Accountableneſs to him at the laſt Day. Might I be allowed to interpoſe with Advice here, I would ſuggeſt three or four Hints.

1. As the Town increaſes in Populouſneſs, and an increaſe of Licentiouſneſs and Diſorder ſeems of late to have grown among us, and is likely ſtill to grow, the more Care is requiſite in the Detection and Puniſhment of Offenders. Remiſſneſs here, and the avoiding of any Trouble to ourſelves, and exceſſive Lenity, were a Cruelty to the Public. Audacious Wickedneſs is never overcome this Way. It ever requires more Severity of Treatment. You will underſtand I mean Severity, tempered always with Equity and Diſcretion, and ſupported by the Laws of our Country.

2. As the too frequent licenſing of Public Houſes has been, perhaps, for a Number of Years a great Abuſe in our Police, would it not be extremely neceſſary to be more wary in this Point? It is not from accidental Meetings of diſorderly Perſons in the Streets that, generally ſpeaking, much Miſchief to Society is to be expected. More Noiſe than Damage reſults from their occaſional Concourſe. Prevent miſchievous Perſons from having Places of

Reſort to meet in, to deliberate, to plan Schemes of Wickedneſs and Villany, and you do eſſential Service to the Public. Might not uſeful Information be procured of the Character and Proceedings of thoſe Public Houſes which are moſt liable to Suſpicion? You know I mean the inferior Sort of them in Town, as well as many of thoſe which are three or four Miles out of Town. The Evils nurſed at ſuch Places are incredible, except to thoſe who have conſidered them. Should it not be deliberated, whether ſuch and ſuch Places need a Public Houſe at all? And whether many have not deſerved to forfeit their Licenſe?

3. Houſes of ill Fame deſerve no Mercy. They are ſo notorious an Evil, that any Magiſtrate, who wiſhes to ſuppreſs them, may obtain ſuitable Information concerning them; and, if in any Caſe a rigid Conſtruction of the Laws be laudable, it is ſo here, where Bodies and Souls are ruined without Conſcience and without Compaſſion, and Satan's Work is carried on with unceaſing Avidity all the Day long. The Suppreſſion then of mean and infamous Public Houſes, and of Houſes of ill Fame, were, I think, to lay the Ax to the Root of public Enormities. Let ſcandalous Wickedneſs have no Place to reſt

reſt in, and its Force will be diſſipated at leaſt. Much deliberate or ſyſtematic Villany cannot then thrive among us.

4. I grant that the Succeſs of theſe Things depends much on the legal and regular adjuſtment of Information. A Magiſtrate cannot, ought not indeed, to act on general Grounds of Suſpicion; he muſt have diſtinct and ſpecific Information; and there is this Difficulty which lies in his Way, the Buſineſs of informing is held ſcandalous and mean. It is ſo no Doubt in many Caſes which might be mentioned; it is not ſo in all. Any Perſon who, with no intereſted Views, but for the Good of Society, ſhould inform, for Inſtance, againſt an Houſe of ill Fame, would deſerve the Thanks of his Country. I wiſh there were here an hearty Concurrence of Magiſtrates and Informers. Were ſuch honourable Sort of Information as this I have mentioned encouraged, the beſt Effects would flow from it. And may I be allowed to wiſh, that Magiſtrates would encourage it, that it might be tried whether thoſe good Effects would follow or not.

I have thus ſuggeſted four Hints, on proper Severity of Correction, on the Suppreſſion of infamous Public Houſes, and alſo Houſes of ill Fame, and

on

on the Encouragement which ſhould be given to well-meant Information. I ſhall ſay no more to Magiſtrates in particular, but wiſh them to lay that Weight on theſe Things which they deſerve, and to conſider to whom they are accountable at the laſt Day for the Uſe they make of the ſuperior Degree of Confidence repoſed in them.

III. It is obvious alſo to ſee how deeply Miniſters of the Goſpel are concerned in the Text: But as I am ſpeaking not to Miniſters, but to the Laity, I muſt not enlarge on this. Our Taſk is arduous; to be faithful to Men's Souls in profane Times is no eaſy Matter. A great Truſt is indeed repoſed in us, the *everlaſting Goſpel* § *of Jeſus Chriſt*. We are to ſet it forth to you in its primitive Purity, and to make no Deductions or Conceſſions on Account of the Faſhions of the Times. That Men are guilty as Sinners; that we ſhould all repent and humble ourſelves as ſuch before the MOST HIGH; that Salvation is only in the Name of Chriſt; that we ſhould each receive this Salvation for himſelf by a lively Faith; that without ſuch Holineſs as ariſes

§ REV. xiv. 6. This Epithet of the Goſpel ſhews, that it is the laſt Revelation of God's Will to Mankind, and will continue till Chriſt's ſecond Coming, which the Lord's Supper alſo repreſents to us, 1 COR. xi. 26.

ariſes from the NEW BIRTH * *no Man ſhall ſee God*; *that every one who nameth the Name of Chriſt ſhould depart from Iniquity*;§ that Man ſhould be abaſed, and God be glorified, and our eternal Happineſs be expected to reſult only from this Courſe of Things: Brethren, theſe are ſome of the Outlines of Chriſtianity. Receive them in Meekneſs; pray for us who are called on to diſpenſe them. We need your Prayers, aid us with your Countenance and Support. We want no Pomp of Papal Hierarchy; but a Degree of Reſpect is our due, and is inſtrumental to aſſiſt us in our Work. Contempt and Scorn we deſerve not at your Hands, and *he that deſpiſeth, deſpiſeth not Man, but God*, we can truly ſay, ſo long as we do the Work of God in Sincerity.

IV. Let me on this Occaſion calmly intreat the richer Sort of my Audience in general to conſider their Portion in the Text. As much is *given to you, much will be required.* You will not diſpute with me the Truth of this, with reſpect to the Relief of the Poor, and the doing of Good to the Bodies of Men. It is with reſpect to their Souls that I would apply the Maxim, becauſe this has not been attended to as

* 2 TIM. xi. 19.

§ God forbid I ſhould ever be aſhamed of this peculiar Feature of Chriſtianity, becauſe of the Sneers of ignorant Scoffers. See JOHN Chap. iii.

as it ought. Every Man has ſome Influence; we are all liable to infect one another. Human Nature, even from Infancy, is very much diſpoſed to Imitation. The richer Sort have moſt of this Influence. Your Servants, your Dependants, your Tenants, your Labourers are apt to look up to you. Give then to the Goſpel of Chriſt its due Share of Influence. Let any Man name any better Thing to which it can be given, if he can. Servants are ready enough to catch half a Word ſpoken by you in Deriſion and Contempt of Godlineſs, or of godly Miniſters, or of godly Perſons, and will very often make more of it, and give it a larger Degree of Influence than you would wiſh. You will certainly be examined at the laſt Day, whether you gave your Influence to Chriſt's Kingdom, or to that of Satan. Awful Inquiry! a neutral State there cannot be. You are really on one Side or on the other.* I ſay no more, only beſeech you to weigh the Maxim of the Text and apply.

Laſtly, Let me apply the Subject to the Inhabitants of this Town in general. It is certainly much favoured by God in all Views and Reſpects. Ah! whoſe Condemnation at the laſt Day can be more dreadful than that of the wicked Part of the Inhabitants

* MATT. xii. 30.

tants of this Place! *Much is given to you, much will be required.* Let thoſe in particular weigh the Maxim, who came here this Day, merely to ſee a Shew, or to gratify an itching Ear; dangerous and unjuſtifiable Motives for Attendance on public Worſhip! And yet, on theſe occaſional Days, I fear ſuch Motives alone influence too many. Be ſerious before God; you have Souls accountable to him. SALVATION by CHRIST is ſet before you. How ſhall you eſcape, if you neglect it?

May God give us honeſt Hearts to weigh his Truths, and to practice them accordingly!

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